

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4104

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 367

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV ECON BF

SUBJ: CABINET CHANGES: A SECOND LOOK

REF: A. NASSAU 255; B. NASSAU 306

1. THE INITIAL QUESTION RAISED BY THE CABINET SHIFTS EARLIER THIS MONTH WAS WHETHER THEY FORETOLD BASIC POLICY CHANGES (PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO THE ISSUANCE OF WORK PERMITS) AIMED AT RESTORING INVESTOR CONFIDENCE IN THE BAHAMAS, OR WHETHER THEY WERE MERELY WINDOW DRESSING.

2. ALL OF THE QUESTIONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN ANSWERED. HOWEVER, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME INDICATIONS OF AN EASING OF THE WORK PERMIT PROBLEM. LOCAL BANKS HAVE BEEN CALLED IN BY THE CABINET SECRETARY, WHO IS NOW HANDLING IMMIGRATION, AND THE HEAD OF THE MONETARY AUTHORITY AND TOLD CONFIDENTIALLY THAT FROM NOW ON THEY WILL GET WHAT THEY NEED IN TERMS OF WORK PERMITS. THE CONSULATE HAS ALSO BEEN TOLD THAT WORK PERMITS WILL BE GRANTED BY THE POSITION INVOLVED RATHER THAN TO THE INDIVIDUAL HOLDING DOWN A PARTICULAR JOB. IN FREEPORT THE REMOVAL OF ARTHUR HANNA FROM CONTROL OF IMMIGRATION CREATED A MILD STATE OF EUPHORIA. THE COMMISSIONER THERE SAID THAT THE DAY FOLLOWING HANNA' S REMOVAL HE RECEIVED 50 BUSINESS LICENSE APPLICATIONS.

3. WHILE THESE DEVELOPMENTS SEEM TO HAVE RAISED HOPES AMONG
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FIRMS ALREADY DOING BUSINESS IN THE BAHAMAS, THE FEW INITIAL REPORTS THE CONSULATE HAS RECEIVED INDICATE THAT FOREIGN INVESTORS ARE SITTING TIGHT A LITTLE LONGER TO SEE HOW INDEPENDENCE SHAPES UP. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS BEEN IN NEW YORK MEETING WITH FINANCIAL JOURNALISTS, EVIDENTLY TRYING TO REFURBISH THE B-# AMAS IMAGE.

4. SOME POLITICAL DOUBTS ALSO LINGER. EVEN IF THE PRIME MINISTER FULLY INTENDS TO USE HIS ECONOMIC AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO TO RIDE HERD ON HANNA AND FRANCIS, THE QUESTION REMAINS -- WILL HE BE ABLE TO DO IT, PARTICULARLY WITH NO STAFF SUPPORT. IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT HANNA AND FRANCIS CAN STILL TIE THINGS UP IN THEIR OWN MINISTRIES IF THEY CHOOSE TO EMBARRASS THE PM. A FORMER MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITION HAS ALSO OBSERVED THAT WITH THE CABINET SHITS, PINDLING NO LONGER HAS ANY FALL-GUY. IF THE ECONOMY FAILS TO PICK UP, HE WILL HAVE TO BEAR THE BLAME HIMSELF.

5. LASTLY, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME DELAYS AND HITCHES IN THE REASSIGNMENT OF PERMANENT SECRETARIES REPORTED REF B AND REPORTS THAT ADDITIONAL SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS WILL BE MOVED. THERE ARE EVEN RUMORS OF FURTHER CABINET CHANGES SO THAT THE POLITICAL MANEUVERING EVIDENTLY IS STILL NOT FINISHED.
SPEAR

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*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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